

The Department of Community Planning & Development

City Hall, Lynchburg, VA 24504 434-455-3900

To: Planning Commission
From: Planning Division
Date: April 26, 2006
Re: Fifth Street Corridor Master Plan

I. PETITIONER

City of Lynchburg, Planning Division, 900 Church Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

Representative(s): Tom Martin, AICP, City Planner, 900 Church Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504
Phoebe Kilby, AICP, Barry Carpenter, ASLA, Sympoetica, Woodstock, VA

II. LOCATION

The master plan encompasses a two block area on both sides of Fifth Street from Church Street to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Bridge.

Property Owner: N/A

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this petition is to adopt the Fifth Street Corridor Master Plan as part of the City's *Comprehensive Plan 2002-2020*. The plan will act as a guide in facilitating the revitalization of the Fifth Street Corridor and establishes a five (5) year action plan.

IV. SUMMARY

- The Fifth Street Master Plan agrees with the *Comprehensive Plan* which designates the Fifth Street Corridor as a "Revitalization" area and a "Neighborhood Conservation" area.
- The Master Plan proposes the revitalization of the Fifth Street Corridor by implementing a series of public improvements such as an urban roundabout at Fifth and Federal Streets, ten (10) foot sidewalks, landscaping, and the addition of on-street parking to the northbound side of the Corridor.
- In order for the corridor to succeed, it must serve the needs of the residents and be an attractive gateway to both Downtown and Midtown.
- It is essential that CSO and utility projects be accelerated and coordinated to facilitate the necessary streetscape improvements outlined in the Master Plan.

The Planning Division recommends adoption of the Fifth Street Corridor Master Plan.

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. **Comprehensive Plan.** The Lynchburg *Comprehensive Plan* designates the Fifth Street Corridor as a revitalization and Neighborhood Conservation area. These areas are important for restoring historic mercantile centers; eliminating vacancy and blight; providing retail service and employment opportunities in close proximity to inner City neighborhoods; taking advantage of existing City infrastructure; reusing existing buildings and improving the City's image. (pg 4.5)
2. **Zoning.** The vast majority of the property fronting the Fifth Street Corridor is zoned B-5, General Business District. It is the recommendation of the plan that an overlay district be established to facilitate appropriate development in the corridor.
3. **Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).** The Zoning Official has determined that no variances will be needed for the proposed rezoning.

4. **Surrounding Area.** The following items have required recent City Council approval in the area:
 - December 2000: City Council adopted the Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan.
 - March 2002: City Council established the Rivermont Avenue Historic District.
 - July 2005: City Council established the Pierce Street Renaissance Historic District.
 - October 2005: City Council adopted the Midtown Area Master Plan.
5. **Site Description.** During the first half of the 20th Century, Fifth Street was a vibrant commercial street serving as the center of activity for the surrounding neighborhoods. Fifth Street has declined in activity and vibrancy over the past fifty (50) years. This decline can be attributed to: The shift of retail to the outer edge of cities in the 1960's. Plans to widen Fifth Street to four lanes. The removal of on-street parking from both sides of Fifth Street in the late 1960's. The removal of the off-street parking exemption from properties located in the Fifth Street Corridor during the early 1990's.

Currently Fifth Street has a three (3) lane cross section and is one (1) of three major north-south streets leading into the downtown/riverfront area. Fifth Street is no longer designated as Business 29 as it was renumbered to Virginia Route 163 with the opening of the Route 29 By-Pass in 2005.

6. **Proposed Use of Property.** The purpose of the Fifth Street Corridor Master Plan is to provide a vision and a blueprint for the revitalization of the corridor between Main Street and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Bridge. The primary focus is the area two blocks on either side of Fifth Street, though the surrounding neighborhoods, including College Hill, Garland Hill and Tinbridge Hill are also very important to the areas revitalization. Fifth Street links the Downtown/Riverfront and Midtown areas of the City, both of which are the focus of revitalization efforts. *In order for the corridor to succeed, it must serve the needs of the residents and be an attractive gateway to both Downtown and Midtown.*
7. **Traffic and Parking.** Major elements of the Fifth Street Corridor Master plan focus on streetscape and roadway improvements. Specifically the Master Plan recommends that a modern roundabout be constructed at the intersection of Fifth and Federal Streets. The Virginia Department of Transportation has begun to promote roundabouts "to reduce injury accidents, traffic delays, fuel consumption, air pollution and construction as well as maintenance costs, while moving more traffic and enhancing intersection beauty". Traffic circles have been used successfully in Europe and even in Amherst County on U.S. Route 60 for many years.

The Master Plan also provides for the reconfiguration of the Fifth Street cross section into two (2) travel lanes and one (1) parking lane. Left turn lanes are indicated at Monroe, Polk, Court and Church Streets. Loading zones are incorporated into the plan, however exact location will need to be determined based on the needs of the businesses.

Bus stops are planned every two (2) blocks with bus shelters proposed at Madison and Polk streets in front of the City parking lots.

A traffic study was conducted by Martin, Alexiou, Bryson (MAB) in conjunction with the preparation of the Master Plan. Data collected indicates that an average of 20,086 vehicles per day use Fifth Street, East of Jackson Street and 15,832 vehicles per day use Fifth Street, West of Fillmore Street. Of these vehicles one and eight tenths percent (1.8) percent are heavy vehicles such as large trucks and busses and forty-six percent (46%) of the total vehicles are using Fifth Street as a "cut through".

The study indicates that with a "coordinated" signal system, the roundabout and on-street parking the Corridor will operate at a Level of Service "C" in the "A.M." Peak and a Level of Service "E" for northbound traffic and a Level of Service "D" for southbound traffic during the "P.M." peak during the year 2030. These Level of Service results are based upon a one percent (1%) compounded annual growth rate for average daily trips. The study did not account for any strengthening of the surrounding grid system or the diversion of cut through traffic to alternative routes.

Should revitalization of Fifth Street build to the point where traffic becomes congested to unacceptable levels, the City can examine the possibility of: Strengthening the surrounding grid of

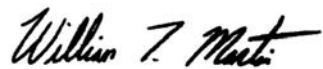
supporting streets. Restrict left hand turning movements during peak hours. Restrict on street parking during peak hours. Remove on-street parking entirely. *The last option should only be considered as a last resort.*

8. **Storm Water Management.** There are currently two (2) planned Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) projects that affect Fifth Street as shown in figure 4.10 of the plan. **(pg 30)** Utilities also plan to install a new raw water line under Fifth Street from the James River to the City water treatment plant. *It is essential that these projects be accelerated and coordinated to facilitate the necessary streetscape improvements outlined in the Master Plan.*
9. **Emergency Services.** Emergency vehicles will continue to be able to use Fifth Street with the proposed lane configuration and design. Fire Station No. 1 on Clay Street regularly uses Fifth Street on its service runs. Emergency vehicles and traffic signals are equipped with the Opticom system, which allows emergency vehicle drivers to relay a signal to the traffic lights to make all of them switch to green. This allows traffic to move through the corridor continuously to get out of the way of emergency vehicles. During detailed design phase of reconstruction of Fifth Street, intersection turning radii and the roundabout will be designed to accommodate emergency vehicles.
10. **Impact.** Revitalization of the Fifth Street Corridor is consistent with the Goals and Objectives of the City's *Comprehensive Plan 2002-2020*. Interest in the Corridor has been generated by the planning efforts and is evident by current rehabilitation efforts underway along the street. Adopting the plan as part of the Comprehensive Plan is important to ensure continued private and public investment in the area.
11. **Technical Review Committee.** N/A

VI. PLANNING DIVISION RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Based on the preceding Findings of Fact, the Planning Commission recommends to City Council approval of the Fifth Street Corridor Master Plan and its inclusion as part of the *City's Comprehensive Plan 2002-2020*.

This matter is respectfully offered for your consideration.



William T. Martin, AICP
City Planner

pc: Mr. L. Kimball Payne, III, City Manager
Mr. Walter C. Erwin, City Attorney
Mr. J. Lee Newland, Director of Engineering
Capt. Michael L. Thomas, Fire Marshal
Lt. Danny R. Marks, Lynchburg Police Department Field Operations Bureau
Capt. Todd Swisher, Lynchburg Police Department North Division
Capt. J.P. Stokes, Lynchburg Police Department East Division
Capt. Al Thomas, Lynchburg Police Department South Division
Mr. Gerry L. Harter, Traffic Engineer
Mr. Robert Drane, Building Commissioner
Mr. Keith Wright, Zoning Official
Mr. Robert S. Fowler, Zoning Official
Mrs. Erin B. Hawkins, Environmental Planner

VII. ATTACHMENTS

1. **Fifth Street Corridor Master Plan**
(see attached plan)